

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a communications system comprising a packet-switched network, a circuit-switched network, a plurality of gateways connecting the circuit-switched network to the packet-switched network, said method comprising:

- a) receiving packet traffic at one of the gateways;
- b) establishing in the circuit-switched network a circuit from said one gateway to a node on the circuit-switched network;
- c) outputting the said packet traffic from said one gateway onto the circuit of the circuit-switched network;
- d) concurrent with the outputting of said packet traffic in step (c), outputting, from a plurality of gateways, polling messages addressed to the destination address of the packet traffic;
- e) receiving at the gateways replies from the destination address;
- f) determining respective delays for the replies at different gateways;
- g) selecting one of the gateways depending on the respective delay times; and
- h) establishing a virtual circuit to the gateway selected in step (g).

2. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 1, in which the circuit-switched network includes a plurality of independently controlled networks and different ones of the plurality of gateways are connected to different respective ones of the plurality of networks.

3. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 1, in which at least one of the gateways communicate a respective delay time to a control node and the step of selecting one of the gateways is carried out by the control node.

4. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 3, in which only each gateway having a respective delay value less than a threshold value communicates its delay value to the control node.

5. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 1 in which the packets are Internet Protocol (IP) packets.

6. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 1 in which the circuit-switched network is an ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) network.

7. (Previously Presented) A control node for use in a method as in claim 1, the control node including a control processor and a signalling interface, which signalling interface, in use, communicates signals with a plurality of gateways in a circuit-switched network, the control processor being arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:

- a) communicating instructions to the plurality of gateways to transmit polling messages to a destination address in a circuit-switched network connected to the gateways;
- b) receiving from the plurality of gateways indications of respective delays in responses to the polling messages; and
- c) selecting, depending on the respective delays, one of the gateways as the end-point of a virtual circuit.

8. (Previously Presented) A gateway for use in a method as in claim 1, the gateway including a first interface for connection to a packet-switched network, a second interface for connection to a circuit-switched network, and a control processor including a control interface arranged to communicate control signals with a control node, the control processor being arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:

- a) in response to a control message from the control mode transmitting a polling message to a destination address in the circuit-switched network;
- b) receiving a reply from the destination address and determining the delay of the reply; and
- c) communicating the reply to the control node.

9. (Previously Presented) A communications network including a control node as in claim 7 and a gateway including a first interface for connection to a packet-switched network, a second interface for connection to a circuit-switched network, and a

control processor including a control interface arranged to communicate control signals with a control node, the control processor being arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:

- a) in response to a control message from the control mode transmitting a polling message to a destination address in the circuit-switched network;
- b) receiving a reply from the destination address and determining the delay of the reply; and
- c) communicating the reply to the control node.

10. (Previously Presented) A method as in claim 1 further comprising:

monitoring the level of traffic over the circuit established in step (b) and carrying out the selection step (g) and the establishing step (h) only when traffic above a certain level is detected on that circuit.